



News

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NASA Signs On with Cal Poly's Picosatellite Deployer

SAN LUIS OBISPO — In the 10 years since Cal Poly developed the Poly Picosatellite Orbital Deployer (P-POD), there have been six launches in the U.S. and Russia of 32 small "CubeSat" satellites using the deployer, and close to 100 Cal Poly students have taken part in the satellite-launching program.

But that's only the beginning. NASA has just announced a five-year contract award to Cal Poly to provide a broad range of P-POD services for NASA's own CubeSat program. The contract's maximum cumulative potential value is \$5 million.



The contract will ensure out-of-this-world, hands-on opportunities for Cal Poly students, who will be involved in actual launch campaigns working with launch providers, the NASA launch team and all universities developing CubeSats.

Cal Poly and Stanford University created the CubeSat Standard to provide developers with guidelines to interface with the P-POD, which is a tubular, spring loaded mechanism easily integrated into any launch vehicle. CubeSats are research spacecrafts measuring 10 cm square with a mass of up to 1 kg.

NASA's contract with Cal Poly is part of the agency's Educational Launch of Nanosatellites program, a series of small, student-built satellite missions intended to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics in higher education.

The visionary behind the Cal Poly CubeSat/P-POD program is Jordi Puig-Suari. "From the start," he said, "CubeSat existed to help students understand spacecrafts and the work needed to craft them. We were trying to develop a very simple spacecraft for students. Now we have government agencies developing extremely sophisticated satellites based on our design."

Puig-Suari credits the commitment of the NASA team to providing launch opportunities for students. "We would not be here without their help," he said.

"The NASA contract also signifies a huge level of confidence in the P-POD and our Cal Poly students," noted Puig-Suari. "That confidence is built on 10 years of experience, development of our team's skills and facilities, and our previous launch experience and successes."

NASA hopes the first of its many P-POD launches will take place from Vandenberg Air Force Base in October 2011.

For more information about NASA's nanosatellite program, see http://www.nasa.gov/offices/education/centers/kennedy/technology/elana_feature.html.

For additional information on the NASA contract, visit <http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.html?pid=31718>.

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